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Evaluation

Evaluation of the UNDP Strategic Plan, 2008-2013

Executive summary

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I. Introduction

1. The independent evaluation of the UNDP Strategic Plan 2008-2013 was originally included in the UNDP Evaluation Office work programme submitted at the annual session of the Executive Board in 2009. The purposes of the independent evaluation of the UNDP Strategic Plan 2008-2013 are to: support UNDP accountability to the Executive Board by providing evidence-based analysis; and provide input into the development of the new UNDP Strategic Plan. This is not an evaluation of the content of the current Strategic Plan but instead of the organizational and development performance of UNDP during the first five years of implementing the plan. To facilitate design and management of the evaluation, work was split between two interrelated components with associated evaluation questions.

2. First, an organizational assessment of the use of the Strategic Plan by UNDP, answering the question: How effectively has UNDP used the strategic plan to strengthen the management of the UNDP contribution to development results? This includes assessment of UNDP work in enhancing its comprehensive strategic planning system and using the Strategic Plan to then direct the organization (priorities, focus areas and approaches) and strengthen organizational accountability. Second, an assessment of UNDP development performance answering the question: How has UNDP performed during the period of the Strategic Plan in relation to the strategic intent as expressed in the Strategic Plan goals? The evaluation makes this assessment based on the following criteria: (a) effectiveness; (b) efficiency; and (c) sustainability. The evaluation does not assess the relevance of the Strategic Plan as it is assumed to be relevant at the corporate level.

3. UNDP support to the Resident Coordinator function was not included in the scope of the evaluation for reasons of feasibility and utility. In addition, the evaluation does not cover the work of the associated funds and programmes. Furthermore, this is not a comprehensive evaluation of UNDP performance over the period of the Strategic Plan since, but instead analyses whether and how major commitments brought together under the Strategic Plan have delivered against the stated intent. It also traces the logic of how the Strategic Plan is supposed to influence what UNDP does and then examines the evidence of the UNDP contribution to results, and whether they have been delivered efficiently and are likely to be sustainable. The independent evaluation was conducted in parallel to the process of preparing a cumulative review of the Strategic Plan by UNDP management. It relies less on self-reported evidence and more on independent evaluations than the cumulative review and so can be seen as complementary.

4. Multiple sources of evidence and techniques – mainly qualitative but also drawing upon reliable quantitative data, where available – were used to provide and validate evidence against the evaluation questions and to reach judgments, including:

- A meta-synthesis of evidence from independent evaluations conducted by the Evaluation Office between 2010 and 2012

- Interviews covering individuals from three cohorts of stakeholders: Executive Board members, UNDP senior management and UNDP country office management.

- Document review and administrative data analysis. Extensive use was also made of information from the enhanced results-based management system and findings compared, where relevant, with evidence from donor reviews.

II. Background

5. The original draft UNDP Strategic Plan, 2008-2011 was submitted to the Executive Board at the annual session in 2007 but agreement was not reached

on key issues contained in the draft. The current Plan was therefore approved by the UNDP Executive Board at its annual session in June 2008 after a lengthy negotiation process among member States. The strategic planning process was also heavily influenced by the triennial comprehensive policy review of United Nations development activities process, specifically the triennial review approved by the General Assembly in 2007. The Plan approved in June 2008 included an addendum containing the development and institutional results frameworks. At the annual session of the Executive Board in 2009, a decision was made to extend the Plan to 2013 and the same decision led to the alignment of the regional and global programmes to the strategic plan timeframe.

6. The Strategic Plan for 2008-2013 demanded strategic focus, even while emphasizing that national ownership of development interventions are essential. It therefore recognized that implementation requires that UNDP managers strike a balance between the requirements set out in the Plan and what is specifically demanded, and feasible, within a specific regional or national context. Two roles were clearly defined for UNDP in the Plan. The first was in supporting the promotion of coordination, efficiency and effectiveness of the United Nations system as a whole at the country level. The second role was to provide policy and technical support to the Governments of programme countries. Within the latter, the Strategic Plan document provided direction in four broad themes:

(a) **Four focus areas.** Based on assessment of demand from countries and on UNDP comparative strengths, its work should focus on the following four key areas: (i) poverty reduction and the Millennium Development Goals; (ii) democratic governance; (iii) environment and sustainable development and (iv) crisis prevention and recovery;
(b) **Six key approaches.** In addition to the areas of focus described above, the Strategic Plan was explicit about the approaches that UNDP should utilize in delivering that support: (i) human development-based approach to programming; (ii) national ownership (iii) capacity-building and development; (iv) mainstreaming South-South cooperation; and (v) mainstreaming gender equality and empowerment of women;
(c) **Four country typology and regional priorities.** The Strategic Plan was explicit in recognizing the special needs of Africa, the least developed countries, land-locked developing countries and small island developing States and that they must be taken into consideration, especially with regard to capacity development. It was not made clear how this was to be operationalized, specifically what special consideration would entail;
(d) **Four areas where UNDP should not engage.** The Strategic Plan clearly stated what UNDP should not normally engage in, specifically: (i) specialized sectoral activities; (ii) small-scale projects without countrywide impact; (iii) infrastructure with no capacity-building; (iv) stand-alone procurement of goods and services. One caveat mentioned is that UNDP, as part of United Nations country team response to national demand, will stand ready to serve as the "provider of last resort" in case of a national capacity deficit or crisis, when specifically asked to do so.

7. The Strategic Plan set out the basis of the accountability framework with accountability as an overarching theme among UNDP management priorities. In order to provide greater transparency on the use of all UNDP resources, the Strategic Plan set out the integrated financial resources framework so that the Executive Board and other stakeholders could see a clear link between the strategic priorities outlined and the resources required to achieve them. The Strategic Plan specifically set out requirements and guidance for monitoring and reporting to the Executive Board and at the national level. The total financial expenditure for the first five years of the Strategic Plan totalled $19.7

billion. Of this, only 11 per cent ($2.2 billion) was from UNDP regular resources. The vast majority of other resources were from donor countries (65 per cent of the total for the period 2008-2012) with local (programme country) resources accounting for approximately 23 per cent.

III. Findings on performance

Effectiveness

8. Although assessing performance across the organization is challenging, it is nonetheless possible to identify some broad findings related to effectiveness and the factors affecting it. Evidence on performance largely comes from analysis and synthesis of evaluations that in turn base their assessments on contribution to national outcomes. Delivering the intended change in an outcome ultimately depends upon the actions of a wide range of stakeholders and given the nature of what UNDP provides, successful delivery of UNDP results is likely to reveal constraints elsewhere as much as within the organization.

9. **Finding 1: In terms of effectiveness of contributions at the country level, UNDP is likely to have made, or make, a significant contribution to the intended outcomes in most of its country programmes and across all four focus areas.** Country office self-reporting through the results-oriented annual report (ROAR) suggests that the majority of outcomes were achieved (15 per cent) or on track (78 per cent) at the time of reporting over the period 2008-2012. Very few were reported as being off-track across all regions. The evidence from the meta-synthesis of Assessment of Development Results is less positive. While it suggests that in most cases outputs of projects and programmes are delivered, in terms of the effectiveness of contributions, the overall rating suggests that in just over half of the country programmes, UNDP is likely to have made, or make, a significant contribution to the intended outcome in most of its programme. Although the ADRs use the same framework of outcomes as the ROARs, they make an assessment at the end of the programming cycle rather than on an annual basis.

10. No significant variation of performance across the UNDP four focus areas was found in the ADR analysis. This finding is also consistent with evidence from self-reporting through the ROAR and suggests that the major factors affecting the UNDP contribution are not particularly related to the broad goal areas in which it works. However, in practice, the focus areas each encompass a wide range of different areas of support, and the evidence suggests that there may be significant variations in performance across the corporate outcomes. Evidence from the ADRs would also suggest that given the nature of what UNDP does, the outcomes to which it is supposed to contribute take time to achieve and will be unpredictable. Hence, to the extent possible, UNDP support, both in terms of what it does and how, needs to be embedded in a keen appreciation of the overall context. The need to understand context in turn makes it challenging to judge whether performance, in the short to medium term, has been good or bad.

11. **Finding 2: A major reason for non-delivery of planned outputs is the under resourcing of projects due to the earmarked nature of funds.** UNDP financial data show that most country programmes are successful in mobilizing more resources than the expectations reflected in the country programme documents. What these aggregate figures mask, however, is the imbalance in resource mobilization across outcomes or outputs. Clearly for an organization relying on core resources for only 11 per cent of its programme expenditure, programming becomes a major challenge. Inevitably at the point when the country programme starts, only a portion of the funds required to deliver against it is assured. The outcome statements and supporting outputs across the country programme results frameworks are therefore, to varying degrees,

statements of intent. What evidence is available from evaluations suggests that a major reason for non-delivery of outputs is often the lack of resources that can be mobilized for them.

12. **Finding 3: In order to increase effectiveness, learning needs to be strengthened at the country level across the organization.** Support to national efforts to learn about what works, in what contexts and for whom, is essential if UNDP is to increase its effectiveness. A number of thematic evaluations – on local governance and on national capacity development - have noted poor learning by the organization. The recent evaluation of the UNDP contribution to poverty reduction concluded that UNDP poverty reduction is seriously compromised by the absence of adequate support to learning about what works and why. In most regional programme evaluations, although the potential for the regional programmes to promote more effective knowledge management is noted, they have not fully lived up to that potential. The evaluation of the global programme concluded knowledge production and sharing is not considered a strategic programming priority and is not internalized as part of programming.

Efficiency

13. As part of its efforts to enhance organizational efficiency UNDP monitors the Management Efficiency Ratio (total management expenditure divided by total management and programme expenditure). Since the start of the Strategic Plan the organization has been consistently above target. Yet, while it may be interesting to monitor this from a management perspective, from a development one, it can mask differences in the business models used by different units. The following analysis therefore takes a different approach and distinguishes between two types of efficiency: First, Administrative Efficiency based on timeliness in executing programmes, use of human resources and use of management information systems. Second, Programmatic Efficiency based on the extent to which UNDP has or has not prioritised and concentrated its programme in a set of core activities rather than a fragmented set of programmes/projects that strain its capacity to manage efficiently. However, the treatment of efficiency in evaluations used is inconsistent, both in terms of depth of analysis and sharing of a common understanding, so the evidence is only sufficient for flagging major areas of concern rather than making a definitive judgment of where the problems lie across a sample of country programmes.

14. Finding 4: Even though measuring UNDP efficiency is difficult, the existing evidence is that strengthening the efficiency of projects and programmes is a major challenge. The meta-synthesis revealed a large number of country programmes face challenges with getting projects started on time. Once implementation starts, timely disbursement of funds is often a problem. A further administrative problem identified in evaluations is that UNDP does not maintain adequate oversight of the projects/programmes. Overall, the ADRs would suggest that there are three major reasons causing inefficiency of administration:

(a) UNDP administrative systems are too complex to operate efficiently, especially in fast- moving situations. However, whether it is actually the complexity of the systems or a lack of capacity to use them is open to question, as some country programmes can apparently operate them efficiently and not all projects/programmes encounter problems;

(b) In some cases, UNDP staff and partners at the project/programme level do not have the requisite skills to operate the systems. This is a particular problem in scenarios where project managers get drawn into resolving the administrative issues with the projects;

(c) Some UNDP offices have a portfolio with many small projects/programmes, and given that there is a fixed cost associated with each

project/programme, irrespective of size, this negatively affects capacity within the office.

15. The causes outlined seem to suggest that inefficiency to some degree reflects a series of trade-offs being made by management. For example, country offices, on the one hand, are assessed against the degree to which funds are spent on time. On the other hand, in order to strengthen national ownership they have also increasingly moved to national implementation of projects and programmes. Hence, UNDP efficiency at the project/programme level increasingly becomes a function of the capacity of national partners. Context, therefore, becomes a key factor in determining efficiency and this is something that can only be assessed at the country level and not through summary indicators that are aggregated at the corporate level.

16. **Finding 5: In terms of programming efficiency, most of the country programme portfolios are not prioritized and not focused on a set of core activities.** Since the start of the Strategic Plan, there has been a decline in the number of outcomes reported on each year from an average of 8.7 per country programme to 7.4. This indicates a move in the right direction and a small increase in focus in terms of the number of outcomes. More importantly, there has been a significant decline of nearly 50 per cent in the number of project IDs (i.e., an output) in country portfolios. By themselves, the above indicate a more focused organization, but macro-level aggregated data hide some of the subtleties of analysis undertaken at the country level through the ADRs. This analysis finds that although UNDP country programmes are aligned to the broad outcomes specified in the Strategic Plan, most of the country programme portfolios are not prioritized and focused on a set of central activities appropriate to the strengths and capacities of the office. Instead, the ADRs find a fragmented set of programmes/projects that the country office cannot manage efficiently. Three reasons explain the proliferation of unfocused programmes:

(a) In over half of the country programmes (14 out of the 26 programmes with information), it reflected the difficulty in implementing a more programmatic approach. To varying degrees this also reflected the challenge with managing the UNDP wish to be responsive to national demands, which is consistently identified as one of the organization's strengths, with an ability to decline a request for support based on a lack of capacity. Country offices interviewed noted that this is often easier said than done;

(b) In a third (8 out of the 26 programmes) of the country programmes, setting of unrealistic programme objectives relative to the level of funding available was identified as the problem;

(c) Lastly, three ADRs reported that country programmes reflected a programming approach dominated by the search for funds rather than programmatic logic.

17. Operationalizing this strategic programmatic approach remains a challenge for many country programmes, as it involves trade-offs. For example, the ADRs consistently highlight UNDP responsiveness to government requests as a strength of the organization, yet the evidence suggests that if taken too far, it often seems to lead to portfolios dominated by small projects that appear unfocused and strain the already slim management and technical capacity of UNDP at the country level and hence adversely affect its longer-term effectiveness.

Sustainability

18. Almost by definition when looking at the activities conducted since 2008, it will be too early to make a judgement on the sustainability of many of them. The assessment therefore focused on the likelihood of sustainability, and specifically, whether UNDP projects implemented strategies to manage possible threats to the sustainability of results. The findings below may well refer to the period before the start of the Strategic Plan but even though the problem of sustainability has been reported for some time, there is no evidence

of a concerted effort to address the fundamental issues that surround it in the ADRs. This is not withstanding efforts undertaken in UNDP headquarters to address the issue of sustainability of results through monitoring sustainability and creating necessary incentives.

19. **Finding 6: Programmes are seldom designed with sustainability in mind. The UNDP funding model also adds to the sustainability challenge.** UNDP invests significant resources in country programming and ensuring that its programmes are aligned with national priorities and government policy. In addition, UNDP has increasingly attempted to use the national implementation modality in its projects, on the assumption that this will enhance both national ownership and capacity, thus leading to enhanced sustainability. The overall finding from examination of ADRs is that the likelihood of the sustainability of the outcomes to which UNDP is contributing is poor. The assessment reflects a number of issues common across the country programmes:

(a) The sustainability of results is rarely considered in detail as part of the selection and design process for support. Nor is there evidence of management for enhanced sustainability being a major focus of project/programme management. In no ADR was a country programme identified in which consideration of exit strategies had been explicitly mainstreamed across the portfolio of support as a matter of course;

(b) Since UNDP has no control over its resources in the long term, sustainability of the benefits is often related to the sustainability of the intervention itself and is therefore often at risk. In the case of many of the community-based interventions, support was often withdrawn before community- level capacity had been established;

(c) In the country programmes examined, the more strategic approach to capacity development found within UNDP internal guidance was not found in most cases.

IV. Findings on use of the Strategic Plan

20. The Strategic Plan contains all the elements expected in a stand-alone strategic planning document, although it should be assumed that it would be implemented through the overall corporate-level planning, and other, systems. The effectiveness of the Strategic Plan therefore depends upon whether these other systems are in place, how the Strategic Plan interacts with them, and the effectiveness of these systems.

21. **Finding 7: UNDP has established, and is in the process of strengthening, a comprehensive strategic planning system with the Strategic Plan at its core.** The mid-term review of the Strategic Plan conducted in 2010/2011 was used by UNDP to operationalize its commitment to the Executive Board to improve how it monitors and reports on results under the Strategic Plan and to be responsive to partner feedback and evidence from evaluations and other sources. As already noted, it resulted in the approval of new results frameworks but it also set the basis for further reform of strategic planning in UNDP. In April 2011 the UNDP Administrator launched the Agenda for Organizational Change and UNDP embarked on "a multifaceted agenda to lift performance – from good to great". As a core part of achieving the Agenda results, UNDP rolled out a substantially upgraded corporate strategic planning system in the last quarter of 2011. The system builds upon and integrates several existing tools and processes. It was proposed to develop the system progressively during 2011-2013 so that it is fully functioning in time for the next Strategic Plan, starting in 2014. The main ideas introduced include: (a) the Annual Business Plan – a flexible and adaptable tool that can identify year-after-year what it will take to deliver on the results in the Strategic Plan; (b) an integrated budget that will bring together regular and

other resources.

Providing direction to the organization

22. Providing direction to the organization is seen as the core role of the Strategic Plan. This section examines how effective UNDP has been in this respect. Four specific elements of the Strategic Plan are examined: (a) focus areas; (b) core strategies; (c) mainstreaming efforts; and (d) areas where UNDP would not normally engage. Factors influencing those areas are also examined.

23. **Finding 8: UNDP has been increasingly successful in aligning its work to the four broad focus areas.** All streams of evidence indicate that the description of areas of UNDP support in the Strategic Plan, paragraphs 71 to 121, is an accurate representation of the areas in which UNDP works. From the 30 country programmes examined through ADRs, there is little evidence of substantial UNDP support outside these areas. That is confirmed by evidence from the UNDP ERBM system, which shows a decrease in non-aligned outcomes from nearly 4 per cent of the total in 2008 to 1 per cent in 2012. Consistent with the above, a high degree of alignment is the dominant perception across all cohorts of interviewees. Many of those interviewed, however, commented that the mandate is so broad that virtually anything can be aligned to it within the focus areas.

24. **Finding 9: UNDP has put in place systems to actively manage greater implementation of some, but not all, of the core strategies identified in the Strategic Plan.** The Strategic Plan included a number of approaches that the organization was expected to implement. As UNDP is currently managed, if implementation of an approach is a priority, one would expect to find: (a) a clear statement (definition) of what needs to be implemented; (b) guidance to managers on how it is expected to be implemented; and (c) a system in place that allows senior management to check whether it has been implemented and what adjustments need to be made to overcome challenges. The evidence suggests that this method has not been adopted by UNDP for several key strategies highlighted in the Strategic Plan.

25. UNDP has not put in place systems to actively encourage a human development-based programming approach across the organization or to check that it is used. While human development may implicitly be considered in programming processes, there is no evidence of an explicit and systematic approach to programming based on its principles. Although it can be argued that the idea of human development is so strong that programming is automatically based on its principles and goals, the absence of systems that explicitly set out what is different when using a human development-based programming approach would suggest that gaining buy-in from partners would be challenging.

26. In contrast, UNDP does have a definition of what it understands capacity development to mean and has issued extensive guidance on how to approach this issue. In 2011 UNDP introduced the "capacity development tracker" to monitor the implementation of capacity development activities. Along with the tracker, substantial work has been done to increase the support to practitioners on better measuring results through the guidance note on measuring capacity development and the introduction of capacity development questions in the ROAR. Despite the fact that the UNDP approach to supporting capacity development clearly and consistently highlights that a strategic approach must be undertaken, there is little evidence from independent evaluations that this approach has been systematically implemented across most UNDP work. Evidence from the thematic and ADR evaluations is consistent in this regard. Capacity development is still, in most cases, perceived in terms of provision of

training. Four of the thematic evaluations explicitly indicate, however, that UNDP can implement the approach intended and that it adds value.

27. Although the definition of national ownership as used in the international development community can be ambiguous, in the Strategic Plan it refers to ownership by Governments of programme countries. UNDP provides guidance on engaging with government in the programming, project development and project implementation processes. This engagement is aimed at promoting national ownership and such processes are monitored. The Strategic Plan also sees national implementation as vital for enhancing national ownership and although national implementation is the default modality for UNDP, between 2008 and 2012 the proportion of total procurement using this modality has been consistently half of the total (by value). The ADRs show that while national implementation may be necessary for true national ownership, by itself it does not appear to be sufficient to ensure it.

28. Aid effectiveness is included in the Strategic Plan among the other strategies and context of this analysis it is assumed that is an approach aimed at promoting internationally agreed agreements on aid effectiveness, i.e., dealing with the broader engagement of programme countries with international development cooperation rather than focusing on national ownership in UNDP engagement. Although UNDP support in this area is provided on-demand and not systematically to all country offices, guidance has been prepared for the programmatic interventions in the spirit of the aid effectiveness approach. In addition, UNDP has started to monitor the implementation of the aid effectiveness approach and after the midterm review in 2011, the ROAR was revised to include relevant questions.

29. **Finding 10: UNDP success with mainstreaming gender equality and South-South cooperation has been mixed.** Mainstreaming means making an idea practical by integrating it into everything the organization does. But to do this, there is a need for specific tools and guidance, continuous monitoring and an overarching strategy with clear objectives and benchmarks for achievement.

30. UNDP has made great efforts to support gender mainstreaming. The UNDP Gender Equality Strategy 2008-2011 describes in detail how UNDP can achieve each of its goals so as to take account of men's and women's specific needs, interests and contributions. As such, it parallels and amplifies the UNDP Strategic Plan 2008-2011, and was designed to be read and implemented in conjunction with it. It includes practical tools to help programme units undertake mainstreaming. Other major efforts to strengthen mainstreaming include: (a) establishing the Gender Steering and Implementation Committee; (b) introducing the gender marker across the organization in 2010; and (c) introducing in 2011 the Gender Equality Seal.

31. Since 2008, external assessments of UNDP performance have commended UNDP work in support of gender equality. In 2011, UNDP completed a review of the gender strategy, which had generally positive findings. Although data from the gender marker implies a steady increase in the gender content of UNDP projects since 2008, analysis of evaluations is consistent with the gender equality strategy review finding that, despite notable improvements, gender mainstreaming in project and programme activities remains uneven and ad hoc. Half of the 30 country programmes examined were rated as having successfully mainstreamed gender into the UNDP programme and the evidence suggests that country programmes have indeed been taking more care to deal with gender issues. In the other half of the country programmes examined, the

most frequently cited factor limiting gender mainstreaming into the UNDP country programme was the absence of a systematic approach to gender analysis during programme design. In general, findings/conclusions from the thematic evaluations broadly support those found in the ADRs.

32. The recent evaluation of South-South cooperation found that UNDP has strong comparative advantage in supporting and facilitating such cooperation. UNDP could play an important and critical role in supporting programme countries to scale-up successful South-South initiatives. Moreover, UNDP brokering of South-South knowledge exchanges and learning experiences has produced immediate and short-term benefits for participants with the potential to evolve into more institutional and country benefits. It has also contributed to regional integration efforts, for example, within the African Peer Review Mechanism. Country ROARs indicate that South-South cooperation has now been integrated into UNDP country programmes worldwide: in 2011, reports show that support to South-South cooperation has taken place in 645 of 995 country outcomes in 152 countries.

33. Notwithstanding the above, in terms of implementing the approach set out in the Strategic Plan to mainstream South-South cooperation within its programmes, the evaluation found that there is uneven progress. Since the start of the Strategic Plan, UNDP has made several efforts to formulate a South-South cooperation strategy that would help mainstreaming support to such cooperation but these efforts have not yielded concrete results. Various monitoring mechanisms have been initiated during the Strategic Plan by UNDP management but while these efforts are commendable, they need to be further strengthened. There is much good will among UNDP personnel towards increased integration of South-South cooperation into UNDP operations at the country and regional levels, but the lack of dedicated resources and budgets, specific tools and operational guidance, continuous monitoring and an overarching strategy with clear objectives, benchmarks and incentives for achievement was found to produce practical shortfalls.

34. **Finding 11: UNDP country offices often do things the Strategic Plan states it should not normally do: specifically, undertaking downstream activities with no linkages to policy reform.** The Strategic Plan identifies a number of activities in which UNDP should not engage. In 25 of the 30 country programmes examined, undertaking such activities was a major or significant component. UNDP did generally not engage in specialized sectoral activities or infrastructure with no capacity-building, suggesting that the organization has respected these two directions. The key issue is that the Strategic Plan specifically directs that the organization should not normally engage in small-scale projects without country-wide impact. UNDP leadership has repeatedly instructed country offices to address this issue since 2009, although it will take time before it will be possible to see whether and how country programmes have responded to these instructions.

35. Evidence from evaluations conducted in 2010, 2011 and 2012, however, confirms that management is correct to focus on this issue, as they indicate that the degree of alignment to this Strategic Plan direction remains unsatisfactory. Overall, the evidence suggests that UNDP country offices do not usually select and design downstream projects to maximize the production of credible evidence that can then be used to influence policy dialogues. In addition, with some notable exceptions, many country programmes do not seem to invest enough in assessing whether the conditions that would mean that a pilot would be well-received are in place. Looking to the future, the UNDP Bureau for Development Policy is supporting a more integrated and strategic approach to scaling up local development and local governance interventions that may have wider lessons on how the organization can address this issue.

36. **Finding 12: The trade-offs between corporate priorities and the demands of programme partners and competing programming frameworks have added challenges to UNDP use of the Strategic Plan in providing direction.** Informants from all cohorts recognize the challenge facing UNDP in the trade-off between, on the one hand, corporate priorities and focus, and on the other, responding to the demands of programme countries and where resource mobilization opportunities lie. Yet while recognizing the trade-off, many Executive Board members and some UNDP managers believe UNDP should be more focussed, more disciplined and better at saying no. Similarly, many believe UNDP should be more strategic, looking for areas where it can really make a difference rather than focusing on resource mobilization. The role of the Strategic Plan is also complicated by the fact that it is not the only strategy that affects programming intentions at the country level. For example, country offices interviewed noted the importance of the United Nations Development Assistance Framework (UNDAF) process as the starting point for country programming and this issue is taken further in the next finding.

Communicating UNDP focus and strengths

37. The Strategic Plan notes that it should play a role in communicating the focus areas and areas of UNDP comparative strength. Its ability to do so can also be included among the factors influencing UNDP senior management's ability to provide direction to the organization.

38. **Finding 13: The Strategic Plan was important for communicating internally between UNDP management and the Executive Board but was less effective in communicating across all UNDP partners.** The Strategic Plan was successful, but to differing degrees, in communicating its role internally and externally. There was a common understanding of its role in setting out the mandate, vision, and/or strategic focus of the organization. It also provides direction in terms of the four focus areas. Views on how it should be used to communicate these are more varied. Executive Board members and UNDP senior management interviewed generally agree that UNDP has not been able to communicate enough what it stands for. Given this situation, UNDP developed additional tools to help in this area, specially strengthening its web presence (including at the country level), using social media and disseminating its illustrated annual report. UNDP monitors whether the country office website is updated and reflects key UNDP priorities but the data show that UNDP country offices are below the corporate targets in this respect. Country offices appear to see little use for the Strategic Plan for communicating with external partners even when programming. There is also a perception at the country level that the visibility and importance of the Strategic Plan has declined over time.

Promoting greater accountability

39. The implementation of the Strategic Plan has also coincided with increased demand for accountability by taxpayers in countries providing resources to UNDP and then in turn by the development agencies of these countries. This demand has been captured in the idea of value for money and the need for greater clarity on reporting results.

40. **Finding 14: Accountability through monitoring and reporting of performance under the Strategic Plan has improved over time.** UNDP made efforts to strengthen the performance monitoring system since the approval of the Strategic Plan. In 2007 the evaluation office undertook an evaluation of results-based management in UNDP and implementation of the recommendations set the basis for developing a stronger system and culture of

results in the organization. The new results framework introduced after the midterm review was generally well received by Executive Board members. Of those interviewees who addressed the question, most believe UNDP has become a more results-oriented organization. This is a good example of the importance of commitment by leadership in pushing forward an important reform agenda. Continuous efforts have been made to strengthen the reporting process during the implementation of the Strategic Plan. Accountability has been strengthened by the important progress UNDP has made during the present Strategic Plan period in terms of the transparency of its operations and performance. UNDP Senior Management is cognizant of the problems with reporting and clearly senses the frustration of many Executive Board members who have issues with the system.

41. **Finding 15: The system of decentralized evaluation is not working well and while steps have been taken to improve overall utilization of evaluation, it is not as high as it could be.** There were a total of nearly 1,300 UNDP-decentralized evaluations (including UNDAF evaluations) uploaded onto the evaluation resources centre between 2008 and 2012, which means an average of approximately nine per country office over the five-year period. Coverage by decentralized evaluations between 2008 and 2012 across the four focus areas has been quite even. Decentralized evaluation by programme units remains weak and of all decentralized evaluations that were assessed in 2012 only 30 per cent rated in the satisfactory or highly satisfactory categories (a large increase from 20 per cent the previous year). UNDP management has made important efforts since the start of the Strategic Plan to increase utilization of evacuation. For example, independent evaluations that are due to be presented to the Executive Board are discussed in regular senior management meetings together with their management responses. In addition, implementing actions set out in management responses can be used as a proxy for assessing evaluation utilization. According to the data on management responses to independent evaluations available in the ERC, there has been insufficient effort to do so. Of the 52 ADRs conducted between 2008 and 2012, 15 per cent of all actions are ongoing (with a due-date) and overdue. For thematic evaluations, the figure is 31 per cent.

V. Conclusions

42. **Conclusion 1: Overall, UNDP is a stronger organization that it was when the Strategic Plan was approved. It also faces a very different context than five years ago, including stronger demands and higher expectations from donors and programme countries alike. In terms of development performance, UNDP has continued to make an important development contribution across all its focus areas but efficiency and sustainability remain challenging.** It was found that in terms of effectiveness of contributions at the country level, UNDP is likely to have made, or make, a significant contribution to the intended outcomes in most of its country programmes and across all four focus areas. Within the broad focus areas within which it works, some themes are clearly strengths. Examples of the areas where UNDP works well can be identified from recent thematic evaluations:

(a) UNDP has made an important contribution to national efforts aimed at pro-poor policy development in most of the programme countries where it works. In particular, it has helped strengthen the pro-poor enabling environment for policy-making and this type of support remains a comparative strength for the organization in many countries.

(b) UNDP is one of very few international organizations able to operate "at scale" across multiple programme areas, before, during and after the outbreak of conflict. This work directly links to the broader UNDP emphasis

on achievement of the Millennium Development Goals and to UNDP cross-cutting priorities, such as women's empowerment.

(c) UNDP has made significant contributions towards strengthening electoral systems and processes. The UNDP framework for electoral assistance is well conceived and enables an effective response, if applied appropriately.

(d) UNDP remains an important conduit for development funding. This is particularly clear in the case of partnership with global funds, where strategic, corporate level linkages are cultivated and maintained.

43. UNDP is not alone in facing the challenges of efficiency and sustainability. In supporting national ownership of the implementation process, inevitably UNDP will not be in control of the implementation process and to some extent the degree of management efficiency. Equally, sustainability of the results to which UNDP contributes is often beyond its control, capacities and incentives need to be introduced to ensure that this issue is considered at the time of design. Moreover, both efficiency and sustainability are difficult to measure and context specific.

44. **Conclusion 2: Through various initiatives centred on the Agenda for Organizational Change, UNDP has strengthened the overall strategic planning system with the Strategic Plan at its core. There is still much to do and while the Agenda for Organizational Change explicitly noted the need to start with headquarters and regional centres, the move to strengthen country offices and to clarify roles and responsibilities at all three levels is urgent.** It is too early to assess the effectiveness of the **Agenda for Organizational Change** as the umbrella for a series of reforms aimed at strengthening UNDP organization and management. Nonetheless, UNDP management has started an effective process to take forward the Strategic Plan and strengthen the planning and management systems that surround it. This is especially important given the nature of the Strategic Plan as a political, and therefore negotiated, document that did not please all factions within the Executive Board and is, inevitably, the result of compromise. UNDP by design is a highly decentralized organization and it is clearly at the country level where the greatest contribution is made. It is also here where capacities – as much institutional as individual – are often weakest. Limited learning at the country level – and therefore by default between countries and regions - is an important constraint affecting UNDP organizational and development performance. If UNDP is truly to become a learning organization, then extra efforts will need to be made and appropriate incentives and capacities introduced at the country level.

45. **Conclusion 3: UNDP effectively used the Strategic Plan to direct the organization towards the four broad focus areas but the implementation of all the approaches at the programming level as intended in the Strategic Plan document (for example, the human development-based approach to programming and mainstreaming South-South cooperation) was not ensured. Even where major efforts were made (such as in gender mainstreaming and capacity development) incentives and capacities to ensure country-level implementation were not adequate.** Although capacity-building and development represent the "overarching contribution of UNDP", the organization has not been successful in adapting this approach to the wide range of contexts within which it works. Moreover, the UNDP strategy and its component parts have led to fragmentation in programming due to the lack of a unifying principle, even though the Strategic Plan explicitly stated that this should be human development. All the elements of a useful strategic planning tool are there for the organization to take a strategic management approach. The Strategic Plan document set out the goals,

approaches and priorities for the organization and a framework to facilitate accountability in achieving or implementing them. As far as capacity development and gender mainstreaming are concerned, the organization made great efforts to design tools and guidance for country offices. But in other cases – South-South cooperation, human development – neither of these essential elements of success was developed sufficiently to comply with the approach set out in the Strategic Plan. Yet while UNDP has made efforts to develop tools and guidance at headquarters, these efforts have not been sufficient to ensure that country offices and other programming units have implemented these approaches. This has implications for support, oversight and country-level incentive structures.

46. **Conclusion 4: UNDP did not adequately support country offices in addressing the trade-offs between the approaches and/or priorities identified in the Strategic Plan. For example, the trade-offs between national ownership and organizational priorities or the trade-off between long-term capacity development needs and short-term results.** While the Strategic Plan sets the direction, UNDP management needs to address the inherent trade-offs that it contains. Basing the scope of UNDP work on existing demand does not preclude different demands in the future. At the same time, while the focus areas are based on demand, the approaches contained in the Strategic Plan may not be. For example, the importance of responding to national demands may also have reduced the incentives to ensure implementation of corporate approaches. These may also be reasons for the continuation of downstream projects with little link to policy. National demand may also result in a programme that is too broad to be efficiently managed or for which appropriate capacities are not available at the local level. Greater guidance needs to be developed to help country offices address tensions between national demand (however defined) and organizational goals. At the same time, UNDP comparative strengths lie not just in its technical areas but also in its long-term commitment, flexibility and speed through country-level decision-making. As a result of the long-term approach, UNDP has the potential to engage in complex capacity development initiatives and in support to national learning from different strategies. Both these areas have presented challenges to UNDP.

47. **Conclusion 5: UNDP funding arrangements and reliance on non-core funding present challenges to effective programming and limit performance as assessed by the effectiveness, efficiency and sustainability criteria.** While UNDP is committed to long-term engagement with programme countries, it has no control over its resources in the long term. In some circumstances, sustainability of benefits can be related to the sustainability of the intervention itself and can therefore be at risk. Effectiveness was seen to be affected by the difficulty in mobilizing adequate resources to undertake activities contributing to specific outcomes. Moreover, the reliance on largely unpredictable non-core resources results in challenges to maintaining programme focus. This is especially true when country offices struggle to maintain a critical mass of staff with limited core resources making the imperative to mobilize resources very strong. This challenge presented by the funding model is so important that the logic of having a country programme in a situation where only a small percentage of resources can be programmed needs to be examined. Keeping within the framework of the UNDAF and focusing on projects (and by default results in terms of project outcomes) may be a more appropriate approach. This could be especially effective where UNDP country offices are focused on only a few core initiatives in which they are able to exploit their comparative strengths and develop appropriate partnerships.

48. **Conclusion 6: The performance monitoring and reporting system has been strengthened over time. Yet it is not optimal for a highly decentralized organization working on complex development issues where context is extremely important. This is an issue at the heart of its performance monitoring and reporting challenges. To create a more appropriate performance monitoring and assessment system, the country programme should be the unit of analysis.** An adequate system to assess performance across the organization is an essential part of the management of any organization. The decentralized nature of the organization, very rare among development organizations, is a major strength; it allows UNDP the flexibility to adapt to different contexts and greater national ownership of programmes. Yet it also requires a different approach to monitoring and one where context plays a role. Such an approach is logically consistent with the Executive Board-approved country programme document and with the Country Programme Action Plan as the nationally owned basis of implementing the programme. Accountability to government is already facilitated though annual Country Programme Action Plan meetings, a system run in parallel to the annual reporting process to UNDP senior management, and through the annual report of the Administrator, to the Executive Board.

VI. Recommendations

49. **Recommendation 1: The new Strategic Plan needs to be clear about the direction it wants UNDP to take and UNDP management needs to ensure that adequate tools are put in place to support and monitor implementation of the strategies and priorities contained in the plan.** A key conclusion was that efforts to implement priorities and approaches were mixed and not carefully monitored from the start of the Plan. Even though the role of the plan is to provide direction, the role of UNDP management is to operationalize and implement this direction through ensuring clarity of concepts and approaches, developing tools such as guidance, and monitoring its implementation. Yet, the examples of capacity development and gender mainstreaming suggest that guidance and monitoring are not enough to ensure implementation of the approaches identified in the Strategic Plan. Even combined with strong leadership the central actions are necessary but not sufficient to guarantee implementation.

50. **Recommendation 2: The new Strategic Plan needs to explicitly address the trade-offs that occur as a result of the UNDP business model. The** UNDP comparative strengths are not just in parts of its focus areas but, inter alia, in its long-term commitment and in general its position as a trusted partner. These are elements of an underlying "theory" of how UNDP works that is operationalized through a business model. The trade-offs faced by UNDP are inherent in any business model and need to be made transparent with decisions made by the Executive Board as to the UNDP position. Specifically, agreement must be reached on the trade-offs in two areas: first, between national ownership and organizational priorities with clear organizational approaches, strategies and focus combined with guidance for programme units when faced with a potential trade-off.; and second, the trade-off between addressing long-term capacity development needs and short-term results which requires a review of the incentives faced by programme units when reporting on results and the investments in processes of innovation, learning and adaptation that are required if long-term capacity developing is to be effectively supported.

51. **Recommendation 3: The new strategic plan should emphasize the priority of support at the country level, and explicitly recognize that no matter how good the work is at the centre, it is at the country level where the difference is being made.** Effective support to strengthening country offices must be the priority of UNDP central and regional support. Taking into account context variability, the generation of coherent policy support needs to be anchored at the regional level. For its central research function, in the spirit of one-United Nations and in order to prevent duplication of work, UNDP should work more closely with the United Nations Secretariat Department of Social and Economic Affairs and the United Nations University. Moreover, to overcome the tendency to work in silos, sustainable human development as a unifying principle should be explicitly at the centre of country-level programming. Practical support and guidance needs to be provided to ensure that this becomes a reality.

52. **Recommendation 4: When assessing performance, the new Strategic Plan needs to take the country programme as the unit of analysis. This will allow a more realistic and meaningful assessment, taking into account the country-level context.** In complex development situations and areas of intervention, the role of context is vital in determining performance. The contexts and areas in which UNDP works can only be fully internalized if performance assessment is made at the country level (i.e., the country programme). Taking the country level as the unit of analysis for performance in terms of contribution to outcomes would still require country office reporting on approaches and outputs for aggregation at the corporate level. Moreover, a focus on the country programme would allow the monitoring and evaluation systems to be vertically integrated so that selected independent evaluations could validate (or not) the performance assessment made through the monitoring system.

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Management response to the evaluation of the UNDP strategic plan, 2008-2013

Context and background

1. This report summarizes the response of UNDP management to the evaluation of the organization's strategic plan, 2008-2013. The purposes of the evaluation were to support UNDP accountability to the Executive Board by providing evidence-based analysis and inputs into the development of the new UNDP strategic plan, 2014-2017. This management response to the evaluation of the strategic plan, 2008-2013, should be read in conjunction with related management responses to the evaluations of the global, regional and South-South programmes, and the cumulative review of the strategic plan.

2. As noted in the evaluation, UNDP is a stronger organization than it was when the strategic plan was developed, and the organization has continued to make an important development contribution across all its focus areas. Since 2008, UNDP has contributed to bringing the Millennium Development Goal (MDG) agenda from 'vision' to implementation; built the capacity of national counterparts in high prevalence countries to address HIV/AIDS comprehensively as a development rather than simply a health issue; contributed to strengthening governance through better linkages between national and sub-national development agendas and through strengthening democratic institutions; and helped embed climate change mitigation and disaster reduction strategies in national development plans across the globe. UNDP is an important link between humanitarian and development actors in post-crisis settings, and has been an important contributor to preventing violence in fragile settings as well as assisting countries and communities to rebuild livelihoods and re-establish stable institutions and development pathways after conflict.

3. UNDP is also recognized as having made an important contribution to national efforts aimed at pro-poor policy development, particularly with regard to strengthening the pro-poor enabling environment for policy-making. As 2015 approaches, accelerating the achievement of the Millennium Development Goals remains a key focus of UNDP work in this area. Since 2009, the organization has

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been more active in meeting demand from countries for strategic support on the Millennium Development Goals and the MDG acceleration framework (MAF), which was designed as a United Nations system process to address off-track goals and has become the main vehicle of UNDP improved support in this area, having been applied thus far in 45 countries since 2010.

4. Making UNDP and its work more evidence-based has also been a key part of the agenda for organizational change, launched by the Administrator in 2011. The MAF is proving highly successful largely because it exemplifies a more evidenced-based approach, drawing on existing evidence, policies and strategies in order to devise concrete, prioritized country action plans jointly and coherently with the United Nations system. The MAF not only exemplifies the stronger results focus, which has been evident in recent years, but is also an example of how UNDP is moving upstream to target transformational change.

5. UNDP is confident that although progress has been faster in some areas than in others, there has been a perceptible and meaningful improvement in the extent and quality of gender mainstreaming in UNDP during the strategic plan period. Through that period, UNDP contributions to gender equality have grown from 30 per cent of country outcomes in 2008 to 71 per cent in 2012. Gender marker data show a similar pattern. From 2010 to 2012, 36 per cent of UNDP gender-marker rated programming expenditures either made "a significant contribution to gender equality" or "had gender equality as a principal objective", the highest categories of contribution.

6. More broadly, UNDP success with mainstreaming approaches, including gender equality, capacity development, the human development based approach and South-South cooperation, has indeed been mixed and there continue to be variations in performance across the organization with regard to mainstreaming and managing all of these approaches and issues. Although progress has been made, UNDP aspires for excellence; lessons learned from UNDP work in gender and other cross-cutting approaches during the current strategic plan period will continue to inform learning in all UNDP programmes in the future. Strengthening quality assurance processes in the full programme and project cycle will allow UNDP to be increasingly rigorous in ensuring that approaches outlined in the strategic plan are substantively reflected in its work.

7. Since the mid-term review of the strategic plan (DP/2011/22), the organization has prioritized being more focused and at the same time ever more responsive to country demands for more synergistic and issue-based interventions. UNDP has been stressing the interdependencies of social, economic and environmental challenges facing the world and advocating for approaches and strategies that are reflective of this, such as 'triple wins for development', the connection between inclusive governance and social resilience and the poverty/environment nexus. Based on the unique added value and experience of UNDP in working toward the MDGs these past 13 years, the organization is now poised to play a pivotal role in helping to shape the post-2015 agenda. The next strategic plan, 2014-2017, will be designed on an issues-based rather than practice-based architecture, and measures are already being taken to align organizational approaches accordingly.

8. As noted in the evaluation, UNDP faces a very different substantive and operational context than five years ago, including stronger demands and higher expectations from the full spectrum of its partners, old and new. Owing to changes in the UNDP strategic planning system and its stronger culture of results, significant progress has been made in meeting the challenge of explaining the organization's

particular contribution to important development results. This will continue to be challenging, especially because the organization is unswerving in its commitment to work with countries in tackling the deep-rooted and often most intractable impediments to development progress, and to ensuring that gains are truly inclusive and sustainable. More and more often, achieving this entails greater focus and resolve in standing for the kinds of programmes that are likely to drive lasting, equitable change with strong strategic potential. Much of UNDP work is dedicated to tackling these kinds of long-term challenges and trade-offs, where progress is often harder to quantify and communicate, and where the UNDP core/non-core funding model presents particular challenges with regard to predictability for long-term commitment.

9. UNDP recognizes that efficiency and sustainability are key dimensions of performance, and continually seeks to improve the way they are tracked and measured. As an organization that places a premium on national ownership, and prioritizes national implementation at the project level, the identification of appropriate measures and useful benchmarking standards has been challenging. UNDP is committed to managing the trade-offs associated with pursuing efficiency while prioritizing the strengthening of national institutions, arrangements and processes– especially as a means of fostering sustainability.

Strategic planning and UNDP

10. As highlighted in the evaluation report, a key element of the organization's efforts to improve results management is the overall progress, particularly over the past two years, in the UNDP strategic planning system. The introduction of an annual business plan and its integration into the unit-level integrated work plan of country offices and headquarters bureaux has allowed the organization to mobilize its efforts more strategically, and have a coordinated operational approach to achieving results across the strategic plan focus areas. The organization continues to learn and explore new approaches around balancing country-level demand and organizational priorities, and then translating them into a coherent results picture that allows partners to see and understand the aggregate UNDP contribution to development results at the country, regional and global levels.

11. Stepping up efforts at headquarters is recognized as just one part of the puzzle. UNDP remains committed to ensuring that the national results that it pursues with its country partners are strategic and transformational. Country offices stand at the interface between UNDP, with its corporate standards and accountabilities, and national partners, with their own policies and procedures. UNDP is working hard to be an organization that increasingly harnesses innovative and collaborative approaches (for example, multifunctional platforms) to deliver programmes that prioritize interventions which can be scaled up and used to provide the upstream policy options that partner countries value most highly and are demanding from UNDP.

12. The agenda for organizational change focused initially on headquarters and regional levels; attention is now fixed on country offices as the front line of creating real development value and meeting expectations of efficiency and sustainability. Over the last three years, UNDP has worked to strengthen results-based performance management, programme cycle management, and learning from evaluation. Now oversight and reporting are being consolidated through the Country Office Support Initiative (COSI). COSI is helping country offices to manage the interface between country and corporate levels, and to ensure that UNDP commitments to national ownership are well balanced with organizational commitments to focus on

programmatic quality and organizational accountability for results. UNDP has also renewed its focus on improving planning, monitoring and evaluation systems as part of the business models review under the agenda for organizational change.

13. Since 2008, UNDP has been purposeful and innovative in its efforts to effectively manage an imperfect strategic plan results framework. The organization has learned lessons in the areas of performance management, results reporting, the value of the gender marker and capacity development tracker, and the use of country and corporate outcomes, outcome indicators and output dimensions since the mid-term review. The organization's move to become a more evidence-based development actor, with a mastery of measurement and data in its areas of focus, has been challenging but is evolving in a robust and positive direction. Progress, including the shift in organizational culture, is both perceptible and broad. The challenges in coming years will be to generalize this progress in all offices, to achieve more even performance across offices; and to refine performance and knowledge management structures and processes within UNDP in order to take full advantage of the improved data at the organization's disposal, to deepen the UNDP learning culture and put it in service to stronger results on the ground. Subject to Executive Board approval of a strong results framework with SMART indicators for every level of results, UNDP is poised to reap the benefits of learning for deepened development dialogue with all its partners and stakeholders, as it implements the new strategic plan, 2014-2017.

Annex. Recommendations and management response

Recommendation 1. The new strategic plan needs to be clear about the direction it wants UNDP to take and UNDP management needs to ensure that adequate tools are put in place to support and monitor implementation of the strategies and priorities contained in the plan.				
Management response UNDP agrees with this recommendation. The new strategic plan, 2014-2017, will be clearer about the future direction of UNDP. The organization recognizes the need to be more systematic in ensuring that adequate incentives and capacities are in place so that its priorities and approaches are more effectively reflected and implemented in all its programmes. As noted in the evaluation, UNDP made great efforts in gender and capacity development and, having learned from those efforts, is in a stronger position to support the use of its other approaches and priorities systematically over the coming years. UNDP is intent on ensuring a smoother, more managed transition to the new strategic plan, which includes developing stronger incentives to support the deployment of its approaches.				
Key action(s)	**Timeframe**	**Responsible unit(s)**	**Tracking**	
			Comments	**Status**
1.1 The new strategic plan provides greater clarity and focus for the future work of UNDP.	September 2013	Executive Office		
1.2 UNDP develops adequate tools which enable the approaches outlined in the plan to be used fully in its programmes, and which support and monitor implementation of the strategic plan.	January 2014	Bureau for Development Policy (BDP), Executive Office		
1.3 UNDP provides targeted support to country offices in order to support their capacity to transition to the new strategic plan, including through COSI.	Ongoing	Regional bureaux, BDP, Bureau for Crisis Prevention and Recovery (BCPR), Executive Office		
Recommendation 2. The new strategic plan needs to explicitly address the trade-offs that occur as a result of the UNDP business model.				
Management response UNDP agrees with this recommendation. UNDP organizational results are defined at an organizational level and determined at the national level based on national demand for UNDP engagement in specific areas. Improved business analytics and pipeline management will further improve the ability of UNDP to ensure that there is a convergence between its priorities and demand for its support in key areas. Learning lessons from implementation of the current strategic plan, UNDP is intent on ensuring a smoother, more managed transition to the new strategic plan, including more clear guidance to its programmes on managing trade-offs that emerge from the approaches and priorities laid out in the strategic plan. Issues related to the UNDP funding model and associated trade-offs will continue to feature in performance monitoring and reporting to the Executive Board. UNDP will also use the new integrated results and resources framework to underpin a more robust reflection of the relationship between results and resources.				
2.1 Reporting under the new strategic plan provides more robust analysis of the trade-offs that occur as a result of the UNDP business model, including the relationship between national demand and organizational priorities; between transformational and short-term results; and between funding sources and the pursuit of durability in the long term.	September 2013	Executive Office		

2.2 Stronger UNDP performance management and business analytics enable more accurate forecasting of business model implications for achieving results under the new strategic plan.	December 2014	Executive Office		
Recommendation 3. The new strategic plan should emphasize the priority of support at the country level, and explicitly recognize that no matter how good the work is at the centre, it is at the country level where the difference is being made.				
Management response UNDP acts at the global, regional and country levels, and prioritizes support at the country level where development progress affects people's lives. UNDP recognizes the importance of the global and regional policy functions inter alia to support country offices and to benefit all partners through shared knowledge and learning. UNDP accepts that the agenda for organizational change now needs to focus on country offices. The 2013 annual business plan includes important measures to capitalize on more than three years of intensive effort to improve the organization's results-based management culture, and to strengthen country office performance and learning through greater focus, strategic priority-setting, ongoing efforts such as COSI and refining UNDP business models.				
3.1 The new strategic plan clearly emphasizes that support for the country level is the priority of UNDP, and that it is at the country level that UNDP makes the greatest difference.	September 2013	Executive Office		
3.2 See key action 1.3 above.	Ongoing	Regional bureaux, BDP, BCPR, Executive Office		
3.3 UNDP's future global programme leverages the global policy function to optimize the policy mix in order to service countries and to promote knowledge sharing and South-South exchange.	January 2014	BDP, BCPR, Executive Office, regional bureaux		
Recommendation 4. When assessing performance, the new strategic plan needs to take the country programme as the unit of analysis. This will allow a more realistic and meaningful assessment, taking into account the country-level context.				
Management response UNDP understands the recommendation, and agrees that there is the need to establish clearer performance criteria as part of a stronger performance monitoring system. UNDP recognizes the central role of the country programme as the main 'unit of analysis' in managing the organization's performance; UNDP currently monitors performance against country programme outcome indicators and country management indicators as an integral part of its performance monitoring and reporting architecture. The challenge of aggregating data to analyse organizational performance, while understanding the unique country context within which results are generated, is one that is faced by all large development actors. UNDP has made notable progress in its use of performance data since 2011, and continues to build its own capacity to produce high quality, contextualized and nuanced performance metrics that go beyond compliance-oriented reporting to provide a meaningful picture of what is working and what is not.				
4.1 The new strategic plan has a results framework with SMART indicators at every result level that can be incorporated into country-level programming, including new country programme documents and results and resources frameworks.	September 2013	Executive Office, BDP, regional bureaux		

4.2 UNDP annual reports ensure that analysis of UNDP performance is founded on data and analysis of country level performance, and is reflective of country context.	Ongoing	Executive Office, regional bureaux		
4.3 UNDP develops a stronger and more integrated performance monitoring system that provides a stronger evidence base for better evaluations.	October 2014	Executive Office, Bureau of Management		

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Evaluation of the fourth Global Programme

Executive summary

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I. Introduction

1. The Executive Board approved the fourth UNDP Global Programme, 2009-2011, at its second regular session of 2008 (decision 2008/32). The Global Programme was subsequently extended to 2013, consistent with the decision to extend the strategic plan (DP/2009/9). The Global Programme was designed to strengthen UNDP development cooperation at the country, regional and global levels through supporting the analysis of development problems and providing context-specific development solutions. Given its importance to furthering the objectives of the UNDP strategic plan and facilitating its contribution to the global and regional public good, the UNDP Evaluation Office conducted an evaluation of the programme in 2012, which is summarized in the present report. This was the third evaluation of the Global Programme conducted by the Evaluation Office.

2. The objective of the evaluation was to assess programme performance, draw conclusions and offer key recommendations for strengthening effectiveness. The evaluation assessed the extent to which the Global Programme:

(a) Contributed to the accomplishment of organizational development and institutional results;

(b) Established or strengthened the comparative advantage of UNDP as a major upstream global policy actor for poverty reduction and sustainable human development;

(c) Constituted an appropriate mechanism in providing development services, knowledge management and capacity-building;

(d) Contributed to furthering cross-cutting issues and inter-practice dimensions.

3. The Global Programme comprised: (a) multi-country 'global' projects, policy advisers and strategic partnerships; (b) support to thematic trust fund management; (c) development of knowledge products, networks and communities of practice; and (d) associated management dimensions. The evaluation examined all of these areas for the period 2009–2013 to ascertain whether the Global Programme's outcomes and results had been or were likely to be achieved. The degree to which the range of Global Programme interventions and activities contributed to achieving results in thematic and cross-cutting areas received particular attention.

4. The evaluation also considered a number of global developments including the global financial and economic crisis of 2008, the transformative changes associated with the "Arab Spring" and major international multilateral processes – such as the 2012 United Nations Conference on Sustainable Development (Rio+20) and the formulation of the post-2015 United Nations development agenda. The data and information gathered were both quantitative and qualitative.

5. The evaluation assessed the relevance, effectiveness, efficiency and sustainability of Global Programme activities to determine the programme's overall performance. The evaluation looked at advisory service outcomes, scalability and replication of pilot initiatives, and use of knowledge products. As factors related to efficiency cut across all practice areas and were broadly related to organizational management, efficiency was assessed as part of Global Programme management. Assessing the sustainability of some Global Programme results was difficult when small and short-term interventions were not clearly linked to country office outcomes.

6. The evaluation used data and information from multiple sources, including: (a) desk reviews and document analyses; (b) surveys and questionnaires; (c) stakeholder consultations and interviews at UNDP headquarters, regional service centres, thematic centres and select countries; and (d) cybermetric analysis. Triangulation was used to draw on a range of sources to verify individual interpretations and judgements. Over 275 people were consulted during the course of the evaluation at headquarters and in 45 country offices. Visits were made to 15 countries. Pretested surveys of country offices and policy advisers were used. Of the 145 programme countries targeted, 125 responded to the survey. Of the 88 policy advisers, 58 responded to the survey. The evaluation used the data and analysis of five independent regional programme evaluations, and the assessment of development results and thematic evaluations conducted during the assessment period, which were used as background information for the contribution made by UNDP programmes. Where available, data were obtained from the Services Trackers of Advisory Services managed by the regional service centres and

the corporate survey of UNDP (Global Products and Services Surveys). The evaluation team examined advisory service patterns among several regional service centres and within the Bureau for Development Policy (BDP). Cybermetric analysis was used to assess UNDP website visits, geographic location of users, online trends in citation of UNDP reports and documentation, the types of organizations citing UNDP documents, and knowledge products other than publications. The analysis encompassed visits to online platforms such as Teamworks (unteamworks.org) and Teamworks-based communities of practice.

7. The evaluation utilized a quantitative approach to assess each of the four evaluation criteria and applied weighting to determine an overall Global Programme rating; and the performance of each practice area and key programme components, such as advisory services, knowledge management and Global Programme projects. Evaluation criteria and key questions for each criterion formed the basis for the rating system.

8. The evaluation covered all five geographic regions where UNDP works and examined programme performance at the global, regional and country levels. Global Programme responsiveness to the priorities of individual regional programmes approved by the Executive Board was included in the evaluation. At the regional level, the evaluation examined Global Programme support to six UNDP regional service centres located in Bangkok, Bratislava, Cairo, Dakar, Johannesburg and Panama City. The evaluation also reviewed the contributions of the three global thematic centres that were part of the Global Programme-supported practice architecture: the Drylands Development Centre; the Oslo Governance Centre; and the International Policy Centre for Inclusive Growth. At the country level, the evaluation assessed synergies between the Global Programme and country programmes and the outcomes of the support received.

II. Background

9. Promoting and sustaining economic and social development over extended periods has been increasingly challenging to development efforts and needed adaptive strategies. Multiple crises, some of them global in nature, together with the need to respond to conflict in more than 30 countries, have slowed progress towards sustainable development goals. Improving human development outcomes remains a key concern for many developing countries. The implications of the changing global context for development agencies have also been enormous. Resources to address the complex challenges decreased; official development assistance fell by 3 per cent in 2011 and is expected to stagnate during 2013–2015. For UNDP, the competing agendas of new efforts to accelerate achievement of the Millennium Development Goals, support countries facing the threat of reversal of human development gains, and strengthen democratic institutions and public services made the complex corporate policy and programme template even more challenging. The complexity of issues also points to the need for strategizing and adaptation in responding to key development priorities.

10. The Global Programme modality of producing institutional results relied on fully realizing and improving the practice architecture, which entailed a network of advisers who managed, guided and supported the implementation of global-level interventions and aimed to bring consistency and coherence to regional-level work among UNDP practice areas. The practice architecture had a broad scope and supported the implementation of the key results areas of the strategic plan in seven areas: (a) capacity development; (b) democratic governance; (c) energy and the environment; (d) HIV, health and development; (e) gender equality; (f) knowledge management; and (h) poverty reduction and the Millennium Development Goals. Practice groups were responsible for all aspects of Global Programme implementation.

11. Global Programme activities aimed to support development and institutional goals set out by the UNDP strategic plan. They entailed: providing innovative approaches to meeting development challenges; supporting multi-dimensional approaches to national development planning; and ensuring that country-level realities and needs were reflected in global debates and mechanisms. In addition, the Global Programme aimed to support implementation of a practice approach and service delivery model; and to promote responsive, streamlined policy advisory services and high-quality, relevant

knowledge products. Global Programme-sponsored initiatives intended to contribute to United Nations partnerships by clarifying comparative advantage and collaboration mechanisms, establishing partnerships, and integrating United Nations partners into 'Teamworks' and the service delivery model.[1]

12. In each practice area, the Global Programme aimed to provide:

(a) substantive direction, defining the strategy behind each thematic practice and broad areas of intervention;

(b) facilitation of UNDP engagement in global debate and dialogue, influencing the substantive discussion of development issues and challenges;

(c) policy development assistance, shaping global and regional funds and programmes based on country experiences by involving local programmes in international and United Nations system processes;

(d) policy and programme support, by defining policy options, identifying Southern solutions, building the capacities of country offices and stakeholders, offering advisory services and developing and adapting knowledge products and publications.

III. Key findings

13. The Global Programme had the challenging task of providing viable programming strategies for convergence of global and regional programme efforts, and also being relevant to a wide range of country contexts and regional priorities. The Global Programme contribution should not duplicate the work of other programmes, for example, regional and country programmes. The other question that the analysis of findings raises is whether the Global Programme, in the present form, is the appropriate approach for achieving the goals outlined.

14. The evaluation found that the Global Programme has yet to find the appropriate balance between support to country-level work and the activities that have wider relevance in supporting UNDP in global and regional public goods. Given the limited resources and broad and ambitious scope, it was challenging for the Global Programme to respond to multiple complex goals. In addition, many issues related to the Global Programme pertain to larger programming and institutional arrangements that need UNDP-wide action. Many challenges and limitations of global programming presented here are not unique to UNDP and are common to many multilateral agency programmes.

A. The Global Programme contribution was important to UNDP participation in global policy debates.

15. Global Programme support to policy efforts was more evident in areas where there were established programmes. There were examples of sustained policy engagement, for example, on the achievement of the Millennium Development Goals. Global Programme support enabled UNDP to generate momentum within the United Nations for the 2010 High-Level Plenary Meeting of the General Assembly by drawing key lessons from cross-country evidence and articulating proposals that helped to shape the meeting's outcome. In the area of support to electoral systems and processes, the UNDP portfolio of democratic governance programmes, extensive in-country presence, leadership role in post-conflict contexts and ongoing partnerships with national Governments positioned the agency as a global and regional policy player. Particularly notable is the contribution of the Global Programme to a series of policy dialogues around global climate negotiations and the emergence of new biodiversity and ecosystems service frameworks. Outcomes were more visible in areas where UNDP had organizational commitment, such as the Secretary-General's initiative on Sustainable Energy for All and regional and policy discourse through the UNDP biodiversity programme. In partnership with the Global Gender and Climate Alliance, UNDP contributed to global advocacy and awareness-raising at various global conferences on climate change and sustainable development,

[1] UNDP Executive Board, 2008, UNDP Global Programme, 2009–2011' (DP/2008/32), New York, 12 September.

including Rio+20 and both the seventeenth (2011) and eighteenth (2012) sessions of the Conference to the Parties to the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change.

16. The policy engagement of UNDP within the United Nations system was greater in comparison to collaboration with other multilateral and bilateral development agencies. UNDP used and often combined various policy engagement tools, such as commissioning and publishing research on critical issues, conducting analyses of national policy reforms in developing countries, facilitating policy engagement and participating in policy dialogue. Some of these strategies were more effective than others, and the evaluation concluded that a coherent approach to policy engagement was lacking. Although there were examples of participation in policy work by UNDP, its contribution cannot be determined in every case, as each of the examples involved several other development actors. Successful cases underscored the importance of a sustained UNDP contribution at critical intervals.

17. The Global Programme complemented UNDP policy efforts at the regional level. While the level of engagement with the regional institutions varied across regions, UNDP work in Africa followed a more systematic approach to engaging with regional institutions than in other regions. UNDP policy and advocacy activities at the regional level, while important, were not adequate given the rapidly evolving development context. The evaluation found that strategic engagement with regional institutions, such as in Africa, was crucial for regional policy and the public good.

B. The substance and scope of global projects varied considerably. Many projects promoted new ideas or approaches, but cross-country learning and replication remained a challenge.

18. The evaluation highlighted that global umbrella projects, both in terms of content and scope, had a greater possibility of providing new ideas and models for country programmes, compared to projects with limited scope and scale. Also, some Global Programme projects were catalytic for mobilizing additional funding for UNDP.

19. A large number of projects often did not lend themselves to drawing global or regional lessons. Small-scale individual projects lacked the leveraging capacity necessary to inform country programmes. For most projects, it was a challenge to play a catalytic role in promoting approaches with relevance to country programmes and national planning and policy. Cross-country activities required a certain scale of implementation. With exceptions, global projects did not attract additional donor funding or follow-up financing, and there was no proactive resource mobilization to scale up successful projects. Several projects were reduced in scope due to lack of funding. Thematic trust funds were not always sufficient for global implementation, and there were not many instances where matching resources were provided by regional and country programmes. Phased replication was done in the case of a few projects such as the Millennium Development Goals Acceleration Framework and governance assessment.

C. A strategic capacity development approach has yet to be fully embedded in UNDP work at the country level. The Global Programme faced challenges in responding to the needs of the country offices to effectively support Governments in national capacity development. Global Programme efforts were not adequate in facilitating a sector-specific approach to capacity development.

20. Global Programme activities faced limitations in facilitating a coherent approach to integrating capacity development in UNDP programmes. Meeting country offices' needs and expectations, which were often sector-specific, was challenging. While some of the needs pertained to having access to better tools (e.g., improved assessment tool design), many offices needed support in developing strategies for building sectoral and national planning capacities, and for integrating capacity development into country programming. Although a large quantity of tools and knowledge products were produced, their use remained sporadic due to relevance and usability issues. There were also challenges in addressing the needs of different types of countries. Country offices in middle-income countries found the programme support provided by the advisers to be useful.

D. Perceptions of advisory services and levels of satisfaction varied across regions and practices.

21. The range of UNDP thematic engagement has expanded over time, while the number of advisers has contracted, leaving large areas insufficiently covered. Multiple time-consuming tasks compromised the effectiveness of advisory services. BDP and regional centre advisers were responsible for producing knowledge products, supporting UNDP engagement in policy discourse, managing or supporting global projects, and supporting country offices. For headquarter advisers, implementation of global projects and thematic trust funds consumed a significant amount of time. The business model of the UNDP policy bureaus necessitates multiple roles for advisory and other professional staff. There were concerns that separating the programme management role and advisory and policy support services would result in fewer policy advisers than at present. Many senior UNDP staff believed that the policy contributions of the BDP advisers were undermined by the preoccupation with project implementation, and that advisory staff should be relieved of this role.

22. The advisory services were not adequately maximized for technical and policy support or for engaging in global policy discourse. Advisory services comprised a wide range of activities, ranging from policy advice, resource mobilization for the policy function, programme planning, project implementation and technical backstopping to document quality assurance, provision of training and collating and disseminating lessons and other knowledge. The evaluation found that country office backstopping was a significant component of the Global Programme's advisory support. The analysis of the advisory services indicated that: (a) the contribution made by advisory services to country programmes was strong in areas where there were established programmes at the global level; (b) supplementing country office capacities was generally perceived positively; (c) the quality of advisory services was uneven; (d) the broad range of services offered greater choice to country offices with small teams and capacity gaps; and (e) country offices had a low level of awareness of the advisory services.

23. In terms of relevance and effectiveness, backstopping, project-level support, provision of a corporate perspective and areas where there was no local expertise were rated as high, and the contribution to the UNDP global and regional policy dialogue as moderate. Ratings were lower for meeting country offices' needs, duration of support and the quality of the strategic and policy support available. Outcomes of advisory services to the country offices could not be determined in all cases, or could not be attributed to the advice provided. In several instances, the advice provided was either for a short duration or did not entail the level of technical expertise required for more substantive technical and policy support. UNDP established a wide range of partnerships with policy and research institutions and think tanks, but only a limited number could supplement UNDP advisory services. There were also instances where policy and technical support received from partners did not have the ownership of the country office and was not followed through.

24. The level of satisfaction with the advisory services among country offices varied across regions. Satisfaction was higher in Asia and the Pacific, Europe and Commonwealth of Independent States, and Africa compared to other regions. In Latin America and the Caribbean, views of usefulness were mixed, with some areas of support seen more favourably than others. Comparatively, country offices in the Arab States region were generally less positive about advisory support from both the Cairo centre and headquarters.

25. There were examples of technical and policy support to country programme and partner government strategies in each practice area, including advisory support to the Millennium Development Goals Acceleration Framework in over 40 countries; support to transitional justice in the Arab States region and in Latin America; support to human rights institutions; and capacity and governance assessments in several countries.

26. According the country office survey, among the practice areas, support to environment and sustainable development was rated highest, followed by democratic governance and poverty. HIV, health and development, gender equality and knowledge management were given moderately satisfactory ratings. Several interviewees across regions acknowledged the high level of technical skills of the environment advisers. In the governance area, services related to elections, electoral systems and parliamentary developments were considered useful by country offices. Poverty and Millennium Development Goal support were seen as most satisfactory in Africa and Europe and the Commonwealth of Independent States compared to the other practices. Across the regions, support

was seen as most useful in filling staffing gaps, particularly during crisis situations, and in facilitating project implementation.

27. Coordination between the Global Programme and regional programmes was good in some regional centres but left considerable scope for improvement in others. The Global Programme supported the Southern African Development Community in developing a results framework for mainstreaming HIV into strategic non-health sectors, including environment, infrastructure, justice, local governance and planning and finance. Support to strengthening human rights institutions was another example, through partnership with the Association of Southeast Asian Nations. However, coherence between regional and Global Programme approaches and implementation varied considerably. Existing systems for the provision and monitoring of advisory services were found to be uneven; although systems were in place for tracking services in the Bangkok, Bratislava, and Panama City centres, they were non-existent in other regions and at headquarters.

28. The country offices were in need of high-quality, often cutting-edge technical and policy advice to support counterpart Governments. However, expectations were not met, often due to the generalist nature of the services provided. Technical backstopping and project-level support comprised a large part of Global Programme advisory services. Advisory services were often all-purpose in nature, which often led to the perception that the Global Programme teams did not have advanced expertise in individual practice areas in the different contexts where UNDP works.

E. Growing emphasis in the corporate programme frameworks on knowledge management as a factor in the contribution to development results did not translate into adequate concrete measures.

29. Global Programme support to the knowledge practice was important in drawing the attention of UNDP to the critical need for systematic knowledge management. Considerable integration challenges remained, however. Knowledge management remained at the periphery of corporate programming, particularly when compared to core practices and country programme work. The evaluation also found knowledge generation and sharing activities to be poorly monitored.

30. At headquarter and regional levels, different types of knowledge management activities did not receive the same level of attention at either strategic or implementation levels. Global Programme support focused mainly on building the Teamworks platform. Interviews underscored the need for greater strategic clarity in the areas of knowledge production, codification and sharing; connecting people within UNDP and with the broader development community; technology use; and linking knowledge to learning. All of these were prerequisites to positioning UNDP as a knowledge organization. The knowledge management strategy emphasized connectivity rather than production, collation and systematic sharing. The focus on Teamworks skewed attention away from other areas of knowledge-sharing. At the time of the evaluation, having already invested considerable time in building Teamworks, UNDP dedicated efforts to improving the platform for cataloguing, storing and sharing information. Still, certain concerns persisted, ranging from insufficient site and document search options to connectivity, access by outsiders and lack of integration with other UNDP systems and email-based communities of practice.

31. Knowledge production and management were dispersed within UNDP, and there was no centralized system to catalogue and make available all the published documents. The main challenge was the compartmentalized nature of knowledge production, with limited sharing of research and analysis among headquarter units. Interviews also underscored that with some exceptions, BDP publications were of limited use for programming in crisis-affected countries and the tools were found to be too generic.

32. While there was a steady rise in the volume of publications, the quality of their content and their relevance varied considerably. Country programme experiences were not systematically captured, and many country offices did not draw on the existing body of knowledge products. The processes necessary for linking learning at global and country appear to be weak. There was also a lack of corporate direction to link knowledge to learning. One of the major issues regarding publications on

good practices and scaling up was that the context in which such practices worked was missing, thus making such publications of limited relevance for country offices.

33. There were limitations in both knowledge production and its use at the country level, a limitation that cannot be attributed to the Global Programme. Interregional learning was even more limited. Many country office staff members believed that the UNDP country programming approach was not strategic. Although country programming took place within the broad parameters of the UNDP strategic plan, there was no strategic country-level link with agency approaches at the global and regional levels. A notable exception is the national Human Development Reports, where UNDP has been successful in providing a shared understanding of their purpose and approach.

F. Implementation of the gender equality strategy was not strong enough to address the development and institutional gender priorities of UNDP. Global Programme resources were essential in supporting gender-related activities.

34. UNDP corporate policy emphasized the importance of addressing gender disparities for equitable and sustainable development. During the period under review, efforts were made to institutionalize accountability mechanisms to ensure that UNDP programmes are gender-responsive. While there was progress in mainstreaming gender in UNDP work, the pace was not commensurate with the needs of the organization. Progress in operationalizing accountability mechanisms and integrating gender targets into performance management have been insufficient for promoting gender dimension in programmes, particularly at the country level.

35. There were limitations in developing thematic approaches for mainstreaming gender in UNDP programmes. UNDP did not adequately build on its extensive presence in the areas of poverty and the Millennium Development Goals, democratic governance, environment and energy, and crisis prevention and recovery to promote gender equality and empowerment of women. Gender equality was an important dimension of support to elections, political participation and achievement of the Goals, but was inconsistently addressed across the themes and components of governance and poverty reduction programmes. Despite the impressive number of UNDP projects in public administration and efforts to address gender equality therein, there was no comprehensive global tracking of women's participation in policy- and decision-making in public administration at national and subnational levels. At the level of the regional service centres, although gender mainstreaming was included in the work plans, there were challenges in implementation and the resources available for integrating gender were limited. Some of the issues went beyond the Global Programme and there were limitations in the attention paid to gender-related concerns in country programming.

G. The Global Programme helped to raise the priority of supporting South-South solutions, but challenges with mainstreaming remained at the corporate level, where South-South cooperation needed to be adequately articulated and institutionalized within UNDP programme implementation.

36. Opportunities for promoting South-South cooperation varied across regions. Regional bureaus and service centres facilitated South-South engagement to the best of their abilities. Although not a primary activity, South-South exchanges, where they occurred, focused on topics such as climate change, energy efficiency, public administration, transition, and HIV and AIDS. Most regional service centres viewed knowledge facilitation as critical to engaging in South-South activities but believed that enough investment had not been made to systematically link knowledge facilitation with South-South exchange.

37. The Global Programme used thematic centres to promote South-South learning, and the evaluation found that there is scope for building on this experience. The thematic centres provided good examples of the roles they can play, but challenges remain in providing programmatic options for UNDP to mainstream South-South cooperation.

38. The level of engagement of the regional programme and service centres with regional institutions also played a role in the Global Programme's South-South cooperation work. The regional programme in Africa focused on working with the regional institutions and was in a better position to further South-South solutions. There were examples of collaboration that contributed to facilitating regional South-South learning. Evaluation findings indicated that the Global Programme had limitations in addressing the diverse needs of regional South-South engagement, particularly in

accommodating new actors and diverse contexts. South-South cooperation is a quickly evolving area that presents many options for engagement. UNDP and the Global Programme were inadequately responsive to emerging needs.

H. Improvement was evident in the cross-practice work in key thematic areas, although there were limitations in systematically promoting and institutionalizing such programming.

39. At the corporate policy level, attaining the Millennium Development Goals and promoting the human development approach provided considerable impetus for integrated cross-practice programming. Although UNDP policies recognized that compartmentalized programming could not achieve corporate priorities, this recognition did not translate into sustained efforts to promote integrated programming. The Global Programme identified outputs for cross-practice programming, but progress was uneven across practices. By their nature or scope, some activities were inclined more to cross-practice collaboration. Most cross-practice initiatives pertained to preparing guidelines and tools. The practices collaborated at both headquarters and regional service centres, but this collaboration had limited cross-thematic dimensions and involved few joint projects. The emphasis given to integrated programming in the design of the Global Programme did not manifest in actual implementation. Management arrangements conducive to cross-practice work were not in place.

40. Cross-practice programming was much easier when funds were provided for collaboration, as in the areas of HIV and the environment. At the regional service centres, practices that had more resources could better leverage them to engage with other practices. The HIV, health and development practice actively sought to promote cross-practice work, and achieved it to a considerable extent, which many attributed to the funding the practice had at its disposal. The cross-cutting areas of gender equality and capacity development generally found it difficult to engage in cross-practice work as they did not have funds to offer. Cross-practice engagement by large practices such as poverty, governance and environment was less forthcoming.

I. Alignment of global and regional programmes was important to the effectiveness of the regional-level practice architecture.

41. The Global Programme provided the base of the practice architecture, and its effectiveness depended on how the regional services centres were managed. The level of coordination between the regional bureaus and BDP varied. This had an important bearing on the integration of the global and regional programmes.

42. One of the challenges intrinsic to the design of the Global Programme is the weak linkages with country programmes. Shortcomings in responding to country office realities persisted across practice areas and were particularly evident in the Global Programme response to country office capacity needs. The practices worked best and provided most effective support to country offices when there was efficient collaboration with regional bureaus and service centres. Strong coordination was best exemplified in Asia and the Pacific and in Europe and the Commonwealth of Independent States, where the alignment between global, regional and country-level programming was strongest and the Global Programme was most able to contribute to results.

43. Coordination between regional programmes and the Global Programme was not always consistent. Consultations between headquarters and regional bureaus or service centres were not adequate for enabling greater efficiency. All regional bureaus communicated the need for more systematic consultation in Global Programme design and implementation, global publication production and recruitment of advisory staff. Bureaus found that the same consultation was needed during the preparation of UNDP regional programmes.

44. The conclusions of the previous independent evaluation of the Global Programme[2] emphasized the need for strengthening corporate strategy and delivery mechanisms for appropriate support to country offices; partnering with United Nations agencies and development institutions to contribute to global policy; and implementing a results-oriented approach to the Global Programme. Progress in addressing these issues has been mixed.

[2] UNDP, 2008. Evaluation of the Global Cooperation Framework III. Evaluation Office, UNDP.

IV. Conclusions

45. **Conclusion 1: As a global development actor with extensive country presence, a vast scope of programming in key development areas and substantial convening power, UNDP was well positioned to play an important role in informing and influencing global policy debates. The Global Programme had mixed results in building on these strengths and enhancing contribution to country-level development results and global public goods.**

46. The Global Programme was partially successful in facilitating UNDP participation in global public goods, engaging in advocacy and supporting UNDP programme efforts. UNDP participated in global development and policy discussions in different programme areas, with comparatively better outcomes in the area of the Millennium Development Goals. The Global Programme was better at facilitating the institutional role of UNDP within the United Nations system, but less successful in furthering the wider policy engagement of UNDP at the global and regional levels. Although enabling a coherent United Nations approach to policy engagement is critical, this focus has undermined the policy contributions of UNDP. UNDP did not fully build on its country experience in global policy debates and public goods. Knowledge-sharing as key tool for global and regional policy engagement has yet to be explored. The performance of UNDP can be considerably improved by establishing stronger linkages between the global and country levels and by addressing the needs of different typologies of countries.

47. One area where the Global Programme could have been better used is the systematic promotion of the human development perspective in UNDP country programmes. Human development, while central to the UNDP policy framework, is not systematically pursued in UNDP programmes. The Global Programme advocated for human development in global policy debates, but very little was done to support its implementation in UNDP programmes.

48. The Global Programme performed well in programme areas where UNDP had well-established ongoing programmes and capacities. The Global Programme was less successful in trying new approaches and programmes that had scalability across programme countries. Limitations in catalyzing country programmes through new initiatives and innovative approaches, particularly in facilitating country offices to better inform national development strategies, undermined the added value of the Global Programme.

49. Despite employing a variety of partnership instruments, the Global Programme needs to do more to successfully adapt to the fast-changing development cooperation architecture and the evolving nature of partnerships. The lessons from the varied partnerships and instruments UNDP used were scantly documented or assessed to draw lessons. Project-based partnerships, which are greater in number, were less effective in addressing issues of global and regional public goods. Engagement in regional-level partnerships with regional institutions was more effective when the regional programme took a more strategic approach. UNDP faced limitations in effectively leveraging its comparative advantage while engaging with vertical funds.

50. **Conclusion 2: While the coherence of the practice architecture has considerably improved, its potential has yet to be fully realized. A strategic focus across practice areas is needed to maximize results. Furthermore, the effectiveness of the practice architecture depends on the autonomy the regional bureaus give to the regional service centres.**

51. The Global Programme's contribution in building the practice architecture at the global and regional levels has been important. Further coherence of practice architecture at the regional level is critical for achieving the Strategic Plan outcomes. Poor prioritization of activities within the practices has substantially reduced the contribution of the Global Programme. Fragmentation along different funding lines and compartmentalization of global and regional activities at the regional service centres has undermined the practice architecture's potential. There was better consolidation of practice architecture when regional service centres were allowed a greater role in managing the regional programme activities and resources.

52. **Conclusion 3: There is considerable scope for maximizing the contribution of advisory services and prioritizing the role of supporting programme country Governments.**

53. Advisory services are critical for bringing new ideas, evidence-based policy and good practices, but their full potential was not realized. The effectiveness of advisory services varied both in fulfilling this role and in meeting country offices' needs for specialized technical and policy support. The flexibility of advisory services allowed UNDP to support the capacity needs of the country offices and provide project-level support. Countries' evolving needs for policy and technical support and emerging fields of expertise called for a range of skills and subject expertise that were currently not available in all areas.

54. Advisory time and resources were not always used beneficially to make substantive contributions to country offices' needs. One-off interventions and a wide range of supplementary services had limited traction in strengthening country programmes or supporting programmatic approaches. Although some degree of flexibility is important, leaving the definition and scope of advisory services open to interpretation diluted their potential and led to suboptimal utilization of advisers' existing technical capacities.

55. Advanced thematic specialization is critical for UNDP to lead, at the global, regional and country levels, in informing and shaping policy agendas, supporting partner Governments, prioritizing UNDP programmes and leading discussions with donors. The lack of qualified specialists undermined the potential of advisory services to respond to the emerging policy and programme priorities of UNDP. Generalist advisers, while efficient in supporting project-related needs, were not suited to inform specific policies on key issues.

56. Long-term institutionalized partnerships with policy and research institutions are critical for UNDP, especially to complement areas where in-house thematic expertise was inadequate. This significantly constrained technical and policy support in some programme areas. In a rapidly changing global context that demands high-level, specialized technical expertise, the profile of the advisory services was inadequate.

57. **Conclusion 4: Knowledge production and sharing have yet to be institutionalized as a key programming principle. The Global Programme's contribution, while important, was not sufficient given the organization's knowledge management needs.**

58. UNDP knowledge facilitation tools have improved, but in a rapidly changing technological environment they are not adequate and suitable for institutional learning. Although there was a significant increase in the demand for knowledge to inform country programming, most country offices have yet to draw efficiently on all the knowledge generated within the organization, in a development environment that demands context specificity. Lack of adequate contextual analysis significantly diminished the use of global and regional publications for better understanding programme successes and failures. Processes for ensuring the quality and rigour of publications, which currently are inadequate, are critical to influence and inform UNDP programmes and the wider development agenda.

59. Lack of clear accountabilities at different levels of the programme undermined the UNDP knowledge-sharing and facilitation agenda. Challenges persisted in establishing linkages between knowledge production, sharing and learning. Furthermore, the narrow focus of the corporate knowledge management strategy constrained UNDP from taking a holistic approach to knowledge management. A major challenge to the country programme was that knowledge generation and sharing were not institutionalized and country programme lessons were not documented systematically.

60. **Conclusion 5: In recognition of the importance of context and varying needs of the broad range of areas in which UNDP works, UNDP needs to move from a generalized approach to a context-specific and thematic-specific approach in addressing cross-cutting issues, such as capacity development and gender.**

61. This is necessary for the Global Programme to provide the strategic direction required of it. The present approach to capacity development as a cross-cutting theme had inherent limitations in enabling a capacity development focus in UNDP programmes. The conceptual underpinnings and tools are not adequate to respond to the overriding needs of the country offices for sector-specific approaches to

capacity development and complex national development realities. UNDP has yet to move towards developing thematic- and sector-specific models to guide country programmes, something the country offices need. Challenges remain in meeting the demands for supporting Governments in developing appropriate strategies and facilitating nationally-driven solutions.

62. UNDP introduced corporate and institutional policy reforms in order to enhance its contributions to gender equality and further integrate gender into UNDP programmes. Although there was considerable recognition of gender-responsive programing, UNDP did not sufficiently leverage its extensive programme engagement to address gender inequalities in development. UNDP continues to follow a generalized approach and has yet to move towards developing specific strategies for systematically integrating gender into UNDP thematic areas. A thematic-specific mainstreaming strategy with a results focus is needed for strengthening the gender component in UNDP programmes.

63. **Conclusion 6: There were efforts to improve Global Programme management, but they have not been sufficient to substantially enhance performance in key areas of the Global Programme.**

64. Results-based management of the Global Programme needs considerable improvement. The Global Programme's design lacks adequate guidance on how to: (a) facilitate greater focus; (b) ensure coherence with regional and country programme priorities; and (c) address the needs of different typologies of countries.

65. UNDP made positive changes by establishing the Global Programme Advisory Committee and the Management Committee. However, these mechanisms were not fully effective in ensuring periodic follow up, quality assurance and more importantly, in enabling a strategic approach to the activities undertaken. The absence of a well-staffed management unit to support periodic assessment and oversight of Global Programme activities (or BDP activities) has led to poor management of the Global Programme. The lack of adequate outcome evaluations of the Global Programme and BDP programmes compromised results-based monitoring. There were few evaluations, and although there were exceptions, their quality generally was poor and of limited use for programme learning.

66. UNDP has made efforts during the current Global Programme to strengthen and improve the quality of its advisory services and develop better systems for tracking demand. Implementation remains a challenge, however. Effective monitoring of the advisory services depends on the clarity of their objectives. Despite efforts to streamline advisory services, monitoring continues to be input-oriented and the tracking of outcomes is minimal.

67. There was no shared understanding of what global projects should entail. The outcomes of the global projects were undermined because of small allocations to practice groups, spread thinly across activities, making it unwieldy to monitor results. Several activities which are minor in scale and scope and small multi-country projects are categorized as global projects, often with limited relevance for informing UNDP programmes.

V. Recommendations

68. **Recommendation 1: UNDP should strengthen the Global Programme to add value beyond what UNDP accomplishes through its regional and country programmes.**

69. The Global Programme and its various components should: provide conceptual clarity to corporate programming and strategic direction to regional and country programmes; develop policy approaches that have programmatic application; and strengthen programme coherence between the global, regional and country programmes.

70. UNDP should ensure that global activities capitalize on the comparative advantage offered by its country programmes, wide scope of programming and neutrality as a United Nations agency. Specific attention should be paid to global policy engagement and advocacy, and to facilitating development partnerships. The Global Programme should be leveraged to focus on the programming needs of middle-income countries, serve as a tool for systematically promoting UNDP human development perspectives and other programming principles in country programmes, and act as a catalyst to increase its overall impact.

71. The Global Programme should provide a practical direction to further global and regional development partnerships. UNDP should strengthen partnerships with regional institutions and intergovernmental forums to better contribute to regional public goods. Lessons from the approach followed by the Africa regional programme will be important in this regard.

72. **Recommendation 2: The Global Programme should specifically address the need for more specialized policy and technical services in a small number of programme areas. UNDP should develop a corporate strategy to guide advisory services at the global and regional levels. Advisory services should not become a substitute for country office staff requirements and basic capacities.**

73. To further enhance the effectiveness of advisory services, UNDP should reformulate its Global Programme approach. Advisory services should be provided within the framework of existing areas of UNDP strength. They should be strengthened in areas where UNDP has long-standing programmes; lessons from successful examples of advisory services in areas such as the Millennium Development Goals, parliamentary support, anti-corruption and elections will be useful in this regard. To improve the effectiveness of advisory services, it will be necessary to:

(a) Assess advisory capacities at the global and regional levels in order to determine areas of sub-thematic specialization where in-house advisory capacities need to be strengthened and where outside expertise will be used;

(b) Define the scope of advisory services and provide clarity about the types of services advisers should provide. This will entail narrowing the range of activities currently carried out by advisers and improving the quality of the advisory services in order to increase the effectiveness of strategic support. The generalized service should comprise only small part of the advisory services, which should emphasize global policy engagement, strategic programming support and policy and technical advice. Regional programme advisory services should be used to support small country offices;

(c) Strengthen advisory services by establishing (and then institutionalizing) partnerships with policy and research institutions and think tanks. The current approach to providing advisory services with limited expertise is unsustainable given the demand for specialized services. The roster of consultants did not attract high-level experts to meet this demand. UNDP should make sustained efforts to complement the roster with high-quality expertise that could be drawn from a resource base of institutions and individuals;

(d) Improve the quality of advisory services in order to enhance strategic programming support to country offices. UNDP should develop a common results framework for all the advisory services at the headquarters and regional service centres. There should be results-based targets for advisory services in order to minimize ad-hoc and one-off advisory support. A programmatic approach to advisory services should be followed in order to enable regular benchmarking and tracking of outcomes. Monitoring and reporting should include contributions of the advisory services to global policy and country-level programme outcomes.

74. **Recommendation 3: Through the Global Programme, UNDP should translate commitment into actions by ensuring that systematic knowledge-sharing activities are put in place, and their effectiveness regularly monitored. UNDP should also: (a) institutionalize knowledge-sharing as a key cross-cutting dimension of the UNDP programme; (b) provide incentives at different levels of programming; and (c) address other constraints that impede knowledge-sharing.**

75. The forthcoming Strategic Plan is a defining phase for strengthening UNDP as a knowledge organization. In both the Strategic Plan and the new corporate knowledge management strategy, it will be important to establish accountability for knowledge-sharing and define roles and responsibilities for the global, regional and country programmes. UNDP should focus on knowledge-sharing as a policy engagement tool, systematically collating and analyzing country experiences in order to inform regional and global policy debates. The renewed conceptualization of the UNDP approach to knowledge, innovation and capacity also needs to be articulated in the new strategy.

76. UNDP should pay sufficient attention to different knowledge-sharing components (e.g., knowledge products, tools, distribution, facilitation and learning). Specific efforts should be made to link knowledge efforts of different headquarters programme units (e.g. Human Development Report Office, regional and policy bureaus) to better position UNDP in knowledge facilitation. This is critical for UNDP engagement in global policy and knowledge networks. Also, it will be important to develop a user-friendly repository of quality-assured publications produced by different programme units.

77. UNDP should develop a pragmatic approach to facilitating South-South learning and partnerships at different programming levels, and anchor South-South learning efforts as part of the UNDP knowledge-sharing agenda. This will entail providing adequate resources and tools to support and promote South-South learning; providing concrete support to country offices in systematically facilitating South-South learning and sharing; and developing strategies for engaging with regional institutions and intergovernmental forums to promote knowledge-sharing. UNDP should conduct a comprehensive evaluation of corporate knowledge activities and implement the knowledge management strategy to inform the knowledge-sharing agenda.

78. **Recommendation 4: Integrating gender in UNDP programmes and policy engagement needs to be further prioritized. The Global Programme should ensure that the thematic areas allocate adequate resources for integrating a gender dimension in programme planning and implementation.**

79. A thematic-specific gender mainstreaming strategy with a results focus should be prioritized for strengthening the gender component of UNDP programmes. UNDP should ensure that the global and regional programmes pay specific attention to strengthening support to country programmes in enabling gender-responsive programme design and implementation. Programme staff capacities should be strengthened in order to adequately address gender in programme planning and implementation.

80. Projects and programmes on gender-related approaches should be pursued only when they are of sufficient scale and scope, as projects of small scale and scope have limited traction in scaling up or informing UNDP programming. UNDP should instead make sufficient investments to ensure that large projects across thematic areas have a strong gender component.

81. Further efforts are needed to sustain and strengthen the momentum generated in including gender as part of the UNDP results framework. UNDP should pay specific attention to monitoring gender-related outcomes in all programmes.

82. **Recommendation 5: Enhance the efficiency of the global and regional programmes by establishing clear accountability for more effective coordination between policy and regional bureaus, and by strengthening the regional service centres as a vital link between headquarters and country offices.**

83. UNDP should revisit the alignment framework regarding the roles and responsibility of the regional service centres. The centres' autonomy should be strengthened, given that they serve as the crucial link between headquarters and country offices and support regional policy engagement.

84. The Global Programme management planning and oversight mechanisms should be strengthened for priority-setting and implementation and monitoring. Measures are needed to: (a) set standards linked to specific outcomes for the performance of the advisory services; and (b) develop standards and procedures (including scale and scope) for global projects in order to ensure that resources are used strategically.

85. UNDP should take immediate measures to strengthen evaluations to increase the understanding of progress, constraints and accountability and strengthen evaluation of key programme areas that have implications for strengthening UNDP programmes as a whole, such as policy work, knowledge-sharing and advisory services.